

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, EG, SY

SUBJECT: A MODERATE MOSLEM PERSPECTIVE ON LEBANESE SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: MODERATE SUNNI DEPUTY MAZBUDI PERCEIVES LEBANESE WAR AS ROOTED IN CHRISTIAN FEAR GENERATED BY LEBANESE LEFTIST AND PALESTINIAN RHETORIC AND UNRESOLVED PALESTINIAN QUESTION. SYRIAN ROLE AS CHRISTIAN PROTECTOR MUST BE COUNTERBALANCED BY FOREIGN, PERHAPS EGYPTIAN, PROTECTOR ROLE FOR PLO. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET WITH DR. (OF ECONOMICS) ZAKI MAZBUDI, AGE ABOUT 55, DEPUTY FOR RAS BEIRUT, FORMER DIRECTOR OF BUDGET IN MINISTRY OF FINANCE, FORMER MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND A SUNNI MOSLEM. HE VOTED IN MAY FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS.

3. MAZBUDI IS "CONSERVATIVE" MOSLEM POLITICIAN WHO PERCEIVES THAT LEBANESE COMMUNISTS HAVE PLAYED IMPORTANT ROLE IN ORIGINS OF LEBANESE CIVIL WAR. THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IS NOT DUE TO THEIR NUMBERS OR INFLUENCE, WHICH MAZBUDI REGARDS AS SLIGHT AMONG MOSLEMS AS WELL AS CHRISTIANS, BUT RATHER TO EXCESSIVE CHRISTIAN FEAR OF
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PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST ALLIANCE AND ITS USE OF MARXIST

RHETORIC. NOTION OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION HAS EXCITED DEEP-SEATED FEARS WITHIN CHRISTIAN GROUPS, FEARS ROOTED IN THEIR MINORITY POSITION IN THE ARAB WORLD.

4. MAZBUDI IS DEEPLY COMMITTED TO BASIC PREMISES OF LEBANESE STATE GROWING OUT OF FRENCH MANDATE. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF'S OBSERVATION THAT SOME CRITICS (E.G. RAYMOND EDDE) HAVE STIGMATIZED MODERATE MOSLEMS AS "QUIETISTIC" IN FACE OF CURRENT EVENTS, MAZBUDI SAID THAT LEBANESE MOSLEMS WERE -- AND IN PRINCIPLE STILL ARE -- CONTENT TO LIVE WITHIN A POLITICAL SYSTEM IN WHICH MARONITE CHRISTIANS HOLD MOST KEY POSITIONS, ESPECIALLY IN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AND MILITARY HIERARCHY.

5. ASKED WHAT KAMAL JUMBLATT, AS LEADER OF "MOSLEM LEFT " REALLY WANTED, DR. MAZBUDI SAID THAT JUMBLATT WAS AN ENIGMA, EVEN TO HIS FRIENDS. ULTIMATELY, HE WOULD BE A DICTATORIAL PRESIDENT OF LEC EN. HOWEVER, ZJUMBLATT HAD LET HIMSELF BE USED BY PALESTINIANS, AND HE WAS VERY RAPIDLY DISCREDITING HIMSELF WITH LEBANESE MOSLEM POPULATION.

6. MAZBUDI IS CONFIDENT CHRISTIAN LEADERS WOULD ACCEPT RESTORATION OF LEBANESE STATE. THEY COULD EVEN RESUME THEIR CONTROL OF KEY GOVERNMENTAL POSITIONS, BUT THEY WOULD NEED STRONG PROTECTOR -- WHICH THEY HAVE FOUND IN SYRIA.

7. PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, MAZBUDI AGREED, IS UNDER GREAT STRESS. PALESTINIANS STILL RESPECT YASSIR ARAFAT AS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT MAN AND SKILLFUL DIPLOMAT, BUT HE HAS HAD LITTLE TO SHOW FOR HIS EFFORTS LATELY AROUND ARAB WORLD. THERE MIGHT BE SOME CHANGES IN PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, BUT DIRECTION THEY MIGHT TAKE COULD NOT BE PREDICTED.

8. ARAB LEAGUE EFFORTS, BOTH MILITARY AND POLITICAL, HAVE BEEN ALMOST USELESS, AND PROSPECTS ARE SLIGHT.

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HOWEVER, MAZBUDI SEES INTERNAL LEBANESE AND LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN SOLUTION(S) AS NO LONGER POSSIBLE. SOME FORM OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IS INEVITABLE. HE OBSERVED THAT CHRISTIAN SIDE HAD ALREADY FOUND ITS OUTSIDE "GUARANTOR" IN SYRIA. WHY COULD NOT EGYPT ASSUME A SIMILAR ROLE VIS-A-VIS PLO AND LEBANESE LEFT? THE SYRIAN-EGYPTIAN RAPPROCHMENT IS QUITE RECENT, AND FRAGILE, YET SYRIA AND EGYPT HAVE COMMON

INTEREST IN REESTABLISHING PEACE IN LEBANON, AND COULD DO IT IF THEY WORKED TOGETHER. EMBOFF NOTED THAT IN SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT SYRIA WOULD ENJOY ALL THE MILITARY ADVANTAGES. DR. MAZBUDI AGREED AND ADDED THAT THIS CONSIDERATION WOULD CERTAINLY GIVE EGYPT PAUSE.

9. EMBOFF ASKED WHAT USEFUL ROLE US COULD PLAY IN PRESENT LEBANESE CIRCUMSTANCES. DR. MAZBUDI SAID THERE WAS LITTLE US COULD DO WITHIN LEBANON, EXCEPT PERHAPS TO PRESSURE CHRISTIAN LEADERS TO BE FORTHCOMING WHEN TIME FOR POLITICAL COMPROMISE COMES. (BUT HE ALSO CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT THIS IS NOT THE TIME.) ON INTERNATIONAL LEVEL, HE HOPED THAT US WOULD PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL CONDITIONS FAVORABLE TO SETTLEMENT IN LEBANON, BUT HE COULD NOT ADDRESS SPECIFIC IDEAS IN THIS CONTEXT. AT SAME TIME, HE NOTED THAT US HAD LARGELY REPLACED BOTH BRITAIN AND FRANCE AS MOST INFLUENTIAL WESTERN POWER THROUGHOUT ARAB WORLD, THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE IDENTITY OF BASIC US AND ARAB INTERESTS, AND THAT ARAB STATES GENERALLY LOOK FAVORABLY ON AMERICAN INITIATIVES. THUS US WAS IN A POSITION TO PLAY HELPFUL ROLE.

2- DR. MAZBUDI SAID THAT, OF COURSE, THE UNRESOLVED PALESTINIAN QUESTION WAS A ROOT CAUSE OF LEBANESE CONFLICT, AND THAT US CERTAINLY BORE A RESPONSIBILITY IN ITS RESOLUTION. WITH SLY SMILE, HE ASKED, WHAT WAS USG POSITION ON THE QUESTION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE? EMBOFF SAID THAT USG POSITION WAS THAT "LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF THE PALESTINIANS" HAD TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN ANY MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. DR. MAZBUDI SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT BEFORE, AND THAT EVEN MANY ARAB STATES USED SUCH A FORMULATION. BUT WHAT DOES CONFIDENTIAL

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IT MEAN, IF ANYTHING AT ALL? EMBOFF AGREED THAT IT SAID LITTLE, BUT THAT ITS VERY VAGUENESS MEANT THAT IT COULD MEAN EITHER NOTHING, OR QUITE A BIT. DR. MAZBUDI SEEMED TO THINK THAT THERE COULD BE A BINATIONAL JEWISH-ARAB STATE, JUST AS, WERE IT NOT FOR THE PALESTINIAN FACTOR, LEBANON COULD SUCCEED AS A PLURALIST CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM STATE.

11. COMMENT: MAZBUDI COMES ACROSS AS AN EMINENTLY REASONABLE MAN. HE DOES NOT VENTURE EASY SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS. CONFIDENT IN HIS DISCUSSIONS OF INTERNAL DIFFIDENT ON INTERNATIONAL EQUATION. HE IS ALSO DIFFIDENT ON MILITARY MATTERS, WHICH HE PROFFESSES NOT TO UNDERSTAND, ALTHOUGH HE PERCEIVES THAT LEBANESE CRISIS IS NOW IN COMPLETELY MILITARY MODE; POLITICAL

TALK MUST AWAIT OUTCOME OF MILITARY STRUGGLE.
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